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On nights when there is little or no moonlight, the evening gatherings in the village sometimes, although not always, follow the sex division, with the men and boys in the *onjango*, and the women and girls at one or more of the kitchens. Discussion of affairs, with youth listening to age, is the usual order, but the time is often passed in the recital of folk-tales or in propounding riddles.

Riddles are more especially a field of youth but age also enjoys hearing the answers given. A favourite occupation of the men, especially by day, is *ocela*, a game known all over Africa and in other parts of the world as well.[1] Junod calls it 'the national game of Africa'.[2]

The Ovimbundu have brought recreation to the service of their work. Europeans are often irritated by the amount of conversation which Ovimbundu carry on during working hours, but on consideration it may be found that were it not for the conversation and other psychological aids, the work might be quite unendurable. This is especially the case with regard to road work and many types of contract labour. Road songs and work songs are of real help in keeping up morale and in prolonging endurance. Most of them seem to have been developed in the days of the caravan trade, but they have not been forgotten and are now used on many occasions.

A word about ceremonial occasions before leaving the social life of the village. Some rites and ceremonies are celebrated so quietly that they are not even social occasions. Most of them, however, are very social. This is especially true of funerals and post-mortuary rites. During visits to Ngendo I was able to witness two post-mortuary rites and the funeral of an important person of a near-by village. Other ceremonial occasions, such as weddings and a return from a trading expedition, also call for much sociability, but funerals and post-mortuary rites are the social occasions which occupy the most time and attention and make for the greatest conviviality.

[1] Known under the name *Mancala*, which is evidently a Bantu word, or taken from one; cf. the Umbundu *oku mangala*, to play. Hambly mentions *ocela*, op. cit., p. 219. See also Nevinson, op. cit., p. 91. The *New Standard Dictionary* (Funk and Wagnalls) attributes to Arabian origin both the game and the word *Manhalah*.

[2] H. A. Junod, *The Life of a South African Tribe*, 2nd ed., vol. i, p. 345 f.

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children may have enough food. Therefore while parents have their children with them, they teach them, saying, Let us work that we may have much food, for if a person lacks food he will die of hunger, or perhaps he may steal from another's field and get into trouble. Children must be diligent in working.

'But should a parent have a child who does not want to work, the parent may beat that child to teach him sense lest he may be a sluggard (*ocisiãi*). Parents have a proverb saying,

U wa ku vetela[1] *kepia,*
He who you beat in the field
ka ku vetele,
did not you punish
wa ku longisa olondunge.
he you taught sense.

'Before beginning, parents always encourage their children to work. Cultivation, however, is not counted as a profession (*ocipinduko*). Should a person cultivate a great deal so that from his field he has very much food, then people will take notice and say, So-and-so has enslaved a spirit[2] to the seeds, he has spirits (*ilũlũ*) and they are helping him. That causes great fear, for people fear (those who) have spirits.[3] Thus, even though a person should purpose to teach another how to cultivate in order to have much food, the other will only apparently agree[4] because of his fear. Therefore the work of cultivation is not sought after as a profession by children, for they say, Being a farmer (*ongunja*)[5] is the work of sorcerers (*olonganga*) and not of ordinary people.'[6]

[1] *Vetela* is the relative mood (or form) of the verb *oku veta*. There is a pun in its use here since it is also used with *epia* in the sense of breaking ground for a new field.

[2] The verb used here—*oku andeka, andekela*—means securing the services of a person's spirit by killing the person (whether by witchcraft or by actual violence). The person is often a child and often of one's own family. In some cases parts of the body are said to have been kept for subsequent ritual use, e.g. bones and flesh dried and ground for 'fertilizer', or the skull for a drinking-cup. It will be seen that this is sorcery. The reflexive form of this verb, *oku liandeka*, means to form a blood-brotherhood, but it is a sorcerer's pact involving the sacrifice of a third person.

[3] The expression used means either to have or to have the reputation for having.

[4] He agrees with *ocenyo*, a term commonly translated as 'irony' or 'contempt'.

[5] This is the term which we commonly use for 'farmer'. Its connotation should be understood.

[6] This section is translated from a manuscript by Raul Kavita Evambi of Ciyaka.

were polygynous and only one of these contain more than two wives.(1)

The village or imbo (plural *ovoimbo*) may consist of from 5 to 500 such households, the heads of which are usually related agnatically to each other. Most, but not all, of the larger villages are *olombolo* (villages of chiefs or sub-chiefs). These are said to have had formerly as many as 5,000 inhabitants,(2) but today few have as many as 3,000, and there is a general tendency towards smaller villages and even isolated households.(3) There are in general two quite different types of Umbundu village according to the terrain on which they are built. Those on the plains, where there is room to spread out, tend towards a circular shape, with the *ocila* and *onjango* (see below) near the centre. The various sections of the village may appear as quarters of a single whole, or they may be spread out haphazardly. Mountain villages(4) may have houses built on ledges almost one on top of the other. Here there is often no room or no suitable soil within the palisades for gardens or for the dancing-floor *(ocila)*, which are found outside the palisade. Different sections of the village tend to string themselves out horizontally along the mountain-side, or to find successive ledges.

The typical village of Ngendo described by Childs, in Kasongi chiefdom, *etumbu* (sub-chiefdom) of Ekongo, is of an intermediate type, built on a slope. Ngendo has 196 inhabitants, of whom 42 are men, 60 are women, and 94 children. The village is divided into four smaller sections or wards (*ovitawila* pl.), of which the largest, that of the village headman *(sekulu)* has 127 inhabitants, while the other three have 19, 13 and 37 inhabitants respectively. The word imbo (village) may also be used for either of the two larger sections by themselves. Each section has its own elder, but the dancing-floor *(ocila)*, which is the centre of village life, is in the headman's section. The *ocila* is primarily a place for recreation, but religious functions also are held in it, and formal cases tried. Formerly most villages had a second communal building, the *onjango* or "Men's Club House",(5) whose importance was almost as great as that of the *ocila*. Here all the men, youths and boys gathered for the evening meal, and here guests were entertained, lesser judicial cases settled, and the day's work and gossip discussed, while young boys, sitting in the background, gained much of their knowledge of tribal history and custom.(6) Today the *onjango* exists and maintains its former function chiefly in parts of Ngalangi, Viye and possibly Ndulu. It does not exist in Childs' typical village, where the "Men's Club" holds only occasional meetings on the rocks behind the headman's house, and where the common evening meal no longer takes place. The reason suggested for the disappearance of the *onjango* is lack of leisure owing to demands for road work (in the immediate vicinity of Ngendo), for contract labour, involving absences of from six months to a year,(7) and the difficulty of securing tax-money.

(1) And polygyny is thought to be more frequent here than in other areas. See above, p.23.
(2) According to Magyar, 1851.
(3) Childs, op.cit., p.25, fn.1. Childs does not suggest any reason for this tendency.
(4) Formerly many villages were built on mountains for defence, and capital villages of this type may still be seen.
(5) The "Men's Club" seems to be simply a gathering of all the adult men (and possibly also the juveniles) of the village.
(6) Childs, op.cit.; Cashmore, 1944; Hambly, (2) 1934.
(7) Most of the labour on the Benguella Railway is Umbundu, and many Ovimbundu travel to the Union of South Africa for work. (Childs, op.cit., p.10, et.al.)